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Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

36TH YEAR

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Health

- And The American Diet ✓

"Eating smart" may become by-words of a relatively new lifestyle for Americans, according to reports by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. About half the people interviewed in 1400 households said they were altering their diets because of health concerns.



Two reasons given by consumers who were changing, or planned to change their buying habits, were to alleviate existing health problems (3 out of 5 households have health problems) or to avoid potential ones. Higher income households and homemakers who were highly educated were the most concerned. Respondents from smaller households, older, poorer, and those who were less educated were less likely to change their eating patterns.

Health problems listed as concerns included: overweight, high blood pressure (hypertension), allergies, heart disease, kidney problems and diabetes.

In households where changing diets were reported, the avoidance of certain foods started with sweets and snacks, fried foods, fatty red meat, ice cream, and soft drinks. Leading additions to the diets were lowfat milk and cheese, lean red meat, fish, fresh fruits and vegetables, poultry, and broiled and baked foods.

Diet conscious consumers sought to cut down on items relatively high in sugar, saturated fats and oils, and in many cases, calories.

In order to learn what should or should not be taken in the diet patterns, consumers have started reading labels more closely as their main means of determining whether or not a product contains whatever they should add or delete from their diet. Nearly 2/5ths of the households interviewed said they were "label-readers." Many of the respondents (41 percent) said they read labels in attempting to prevent potential health problems.

Other factors changing the food consumption patterns include changes in prices, incomes, household size, and the age structure of the population. More salad vegetables and increasing sales of dietetic soft drinks are part of the picture. The shift to lowfat milk is another. The extensive labeling now offered for nutritional contents and ingredients are making it easier to change buying habits-for whatever reason.

Safe - Rare Beef

Fifteen approved combinations of cooking-time temperatures may now be used by processors in preparing a safe pre-cooked beef roast, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Using these new cooking combinations, "rare" roasts would become a safe product, under revised federal meat inspection rules effective in July and administered by the Food Safety and Quality Service.

(From last September until July of this year, there was no federally inspected "rare" beef. Prior to last September, over 200 cases of salmonellosis in the northeastern states had been traced to rare beef. As a result of this situation, an emergency rule preventing rare cooking was passed. In the interim period, research studies were conducted on methods to produce safe, rare beef.)

For each of the newly approved processes, time and temperature are equal in Salmonella-destroying effect to the recent 145 degree emergency requirement, but these permit the production of a rare beef roast. Salmonella organisms are destroyed by either a high temperature for a short period or a lower temperature for a longer period. However, it is the higher temperatures that cause the color of the meat to change from red to gray. Longer cooking at lower temperatures causes little change in meat color.

A beef roast, for example, cooked to an internal temperature of 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54.4 degrees Centigrade) would have to be held at this temperature for 121 minutes. A roast cooked to an internal temperature of 144 degrees Fahrenheit (62.2 degrees Centigrade) would have to be held at this temperature for 5 minutes.

FOOD CLIPS

Vegetables, either fresh, frozen or canned, provide vitamins C and A year around. But, to conserve these food values and flavor, trim, store and cook with care.

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Leafy parts of collard greens, turnip greens, and kale have much more vitamin A content than their stems or midribs.

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Broccoli leaves have much higher vitamin A value than the stalks or flower buds. Keep the leaves cool and moist and they will be palatable, say USDA home economists.

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ABOUT YOU 'N' ME

New "creative cooking" film with Julie Dannenbaum, distributed by Campbell Soup Co. The 23-minute film is available free for women's groups, scouts, church groups, etc. Contact Home Economics Dept., 56A, Campbell Soup, Camden, N.J. 08101... Jan Goodwin is now senior editor at Ladies Home Journal. Ms. Goodwin was former associate editor of the National Enquirer.....The Electrical Women's Round Table will sponsor a national conference on energy in Washington, D.C., Sept. 27-29. Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture for Food and Consumer Services, will be the featured speaker. Appliance updates, communications skills and techniques and professional development will be discussed. Contact Liz Brigham, consumer services, Porcelain Enamel Institute, (703) 527-5257 for more details.